

Bill 2 Testimony



CITY COUNCIL
City and County of Honolulu
January 29, 2020, 10:00 A.M.

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL 2 (2020)
Relating to Off-street Parking and Loading

Chair Anderson, Vice Chair Kobayashi, and Members of the City Council:

Blue Planet Foundation supports Bill 2 (2020), a measure to modernize the City & County of Honolulu's (Honolulu's) parking requirements. The proposed bill reduces and "rightsizes" parking minimums for development, provides flexibility for meeting parking requirements, makes parking developments more "people friendly," and prepares for the future of mobility.

Blue Planet Foundation is a Hawai'i-based nonprofit organization. We work to clear the path for local, clean, renewable power. Through our advocacy for clean energy adoption, we seek to make our communities stronger, our energy more secure, our environment healthier, and our economy more robust. We appreciate Honolulu's growing leadership on clean energy issues.

Bill 2 recognizes that Honolulu's existing parking requirements not only make construction more expensive and decrease housing opportunities, they encourage driving. Driving is a major source of O'ahu's carbon pollution, and emissions from driving are increasing. On O'ahu, gasoline consumption grew 5% in 2019 over 2018—increasing the island's carbon pollution by nearly 300 million pounds. When parking is too easy and convenient, folks are more likely to drive their personal cars instead of seeking more climate-friendly alternatives such as biking, walking, car-sharing or car-pooling, and public transit.

Bill 2 provides flexibility and reduces parking minimums to encourage more affordable development and more infill development (such as in Iwilei). Such development will help reinvigorate the urban core of Honolulu, further reducing car-dependence. Bill 2 makes a number of other positive and creative amendments to Honolulu's parking requirements to encourage a healthier and more livable island.

Mahalo for this opportunity to provide testimony.

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HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
Wednesday, January 29, 2020 - 10:00 a.m. – City Council Chamber

Ulupono Initiative Strongly Supports Bill 2, Relating to Off-Street Parking and Loading.

Dear Chair Anderson and Members of the Council:

My name is Amy Hennessey, and I am the Senior Vice President of Communications & External Affairs at Ulupono Initiative. We are a Hawai'i-focused impact investment firm that strives to improve our island community's quality of life by making our local communities more resilient and self-sufficient through locally produced food; affordable renewable energy and clean transportation; and better management of fresh water and waste.

We strongly support Bill 2 (2020) to revise Chapter 21 of the Revised Ordinances of Honolulu 1990, as amended ("ROH"), also known as the Land Use Ordinance ("LUO"), repealing Article 6 of the LUO (Off-street Parking and Loading) and replacing it with an updated, consolidated version that provides for a more effective and efficient transportation network.

Currently, most of Honolulu's parking regulations are out of date; lack consistency with the City's plans, policies, and other ordinances; and, in some cases, even obstruct affordable housing development promoted in City plans. The proposed amendments will improve housing affordability by reducing parking requirements and the total overall cost of development, while also accelerating use of carbon-light mobility options and a more sustainable transportation network.

One of the most unfortunate side effects of our current parking policies is its contribution to higher housing costs for local families. Parking requirements in residential buildings are estimated to add \$225 per parking spot every month to housing costs. In some expensive areas, that number could easily be \$350 per month, potentially adding up to almost \$5,000 per year for a 2-spot unit.¹

This remains true even as many residents pay the cost without using the spaces. A recent analysis by Ulupono Initiative examined use of residential parking garages built in the last 20 years across urban Honolulu. Matching the findings from the [Urban Honolulu Parking Master Plan](#), these garages were only 70 percent occupied at peak nighttime demand.

¹ <https://www.reinventingparking.org/2015/06/how-much-does-one-parking-spot-add-to.html>

Further, the number of parking spots was 2-3 times greater than the number of dwellings. One example is a 380-unit condo in Honolulu with more than 700 spaces, of which almost 200 were empty despite a 95 percent occupancy rate. Two hundred parking spaces could easily be 2-3 floors of expensive wasted space in this tower, just adding to the cost of housing. This proposal doesn't eliminate parking, but rather starts to match supply and demand more effectively as new development occurs, rather than arbitrarily dictating an artificially high supply across the urban core.

A recent blog post by the Sightline Institute illustrated how significantly parking requirements alter a developer's plans. With current parking requirements in Portland, Oregon, the most profitable proposal is for high-cost townhomes in the range of \$700,000. Removing the requirement allows the developer to propose mixed-income \$280,000 condominiums.² The implications this has to the feasibility of creating more affordable housing is clear and could be duplicated here by allowing the market to dictate parking, not government.

The proposed changes also align with state and federal policies to improve multi-modal transportation networks, reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT), and develop safer environments. As analyzed in Transcending Oil: Hawaii's Path to a Clean Energy Economy, parking policies reform (including both on-street and off) has the potential to achieve a 30 percent reduction in vehicles miles traveled through non-coercive yet "big impact" means. The result will be less reliance on single-occupancy vehicles, enabling a reduction of future car emissions and increasing the viability of more efficient and safer alternative modes of transportation.

These needed policy updates to how we govern off-street parking will produce all these benefits while helping to make parking more accessible for those who truly do need it — and less necessary for those who don't.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

Amy Hennessey, APR
Senior Vice President, Communications & External Affairs

² <https://www.sightline.org/2019/10/02/in-mid-density-zones-portland-has-a-choice-garages-or-low-prices/>